

**SUPPORTING  
STUDENTS  
IMPACTED BY  
GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE &  
HARASSMENT**

**CREATED BY  
UNC-CHAPEL HILL'S  
GENDER VIOLENCE SERVICES  
COORDINATORS**

# CONTENTS

<b>Contents.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Gender Violence Services Coordinators.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Responding to Disclosures.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Employee Responsibilities to Report.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Referring to Resources.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Support for Yourself.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Types of Academic Support.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Fostering A Supportive Learning Environment.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Ideas for Support in the Course.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Considerations for the Virtual Learning Environment.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Topics that May Be Difficult for Students.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Common Responses to Experiences.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>For More Information.....</b>	<b>12</b>

# ABOUT THE GENDER VIOLENCE SERVICES COORDINATORS (GVSCS)

The Gender Violence Services Coordinators (GVSCs) provide confidential support and advocacy for all students, faculty, and staff at UNC-Chapel Hill impacted by any form of gender-based violence and harassment. All support and services are free.

**Website:** <https://gvsc.unc.edu/>

**Email:** [gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu)    **Phone:** 919-962-1343

**Instagram:** [@uncgvsc](https://www.instagram.com/uncgvsc)

## INTRODUCTION

Sexual and interpersonal violence, stalking, and sexual or gender-based harassment impact individuals within our campus community every year. Whether a student's experience occurred before or during their time at Carolina, coping and managing the impact can intersect with many areas of life, including academics, the classroom environment, and their capacity as a learner. According to the 2019 Association of American Universities' (AAU) Campus Climate Survey, 20.7% of UNC-Chapel Hill survey respondents reported experiencing sexual touching or penetration involving force, an inability to consent, coercion, or no voluntary agreement since entering college. Aggregate data for all 33 campuses that participated in the AAU Campus Climate Survey indicated gender-based violence and harassment had a significant academic impact for students. Survey results indicated 62% of women, 75.7% of transgender, genderqueer or nonbinary, or questioning individuals, and 48.2% of men reported at least one academic or professional consequence such as difficulty concentrating on studies, assignments or exams, decreased class attendance, and difficulty going to work.

AAU Survey Information: <https://safe.unc.edu/awareness-and-education/>

## RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

When a student chooses to share their personal experience with you, we encourage faculty to consider the trust and vulnerability the student expressed by disclosing to you.

Some students may be comfortable disclosing, and for others, choosing to disclose their experience may have been the only way they believed they could seek support for your course. Students may share their experiences with you directly in conversation, in an email, or through assignments and coursework. We encourage faculty to thank the student for sharing their experience, validate your support for them in your course, and ask how they would like to proceed in discussing their needs and potential support. It's often helpful to refrain from asking detailed questions about their experience and focus any questions on identifying concerns and support needed. We've seen that when professors respond with care and compassion, students are more likely to engage with them to figure out how they can continue moving forward in the course.

- **“Thank you so much for trusting me with that information. Is there any support that you feel you need related to our class or outside of the classroom?”**
- **“I appreciate you feeling comfortable to share your experience with me. How can I support you?”**
- **“Thank you for sharing this with me. How about we collaborate to come up with a plan for your success this semester?”**

A professor may be interested in following up with a student at a later point to check-in, see how they are doing, or offer further support. We suggest asking the student during your initial conversation or outreach if they would like you to follow up with them. Some students feel more comfortable initiating communication and would prefer for their faculty not to check-in. Others find a check-in helpful and, in that case, we encourage you to discuss how to follow up. Is it okay to check-in via email? Next week or in a month? This allows the student to set boundaries and develop a sense of control around communicating about their experience. We encourage faculty to follow the student's lead—some may share details, some may share a vague update, and others may not respond at all. If you have concerns about a student, we are happy to brainstorm with you about supporting them.

- **“I really appreciate your openness in sharing this with me so that we could talk through how I can best support you. Is it okay if I follow up with you around midterms, or would you rather reach out to me if you want to talk further about this?”**

## EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES TO REPORT

“ *A student disclosed to me. Do I need to make a report?* ”

**It's important to understand if you are designated as a Responsible Employee and/or Campus Security Authority. If you hold these designations, you are required to share information disclosed to you regarding gender-based violence or harassment with the University.**

We encourage faculty who are Responsible Employees and/or Campus Security Authorities to be proactive in sharing their designations with students to help inform them about what will happen to the information they share with you. While all faculty members may not hold these designations, we encourage you to speak with your department to determine any reporting protocols that may exist within your specific department.

It can be helpful to inform a student that once you share information with the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (Responsible Employee) and/or the Clery Compliance Coordinator (Campus Security Authority), they will receive an outreach email from the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office offering support and resources. Students are not obligated to respond to the email.

For questions about your designation as a Response Employee or Campus Security Authority, please contact the following offices:

**Responsible Employee – Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office; [eoc@unc.edu](mailto:eoc@unc.edu)  
Campus Security Authority – Clery Compliance Coordinator; [clery@unc.edu](mailto:clery@unc.edu)**

# REFERRING TO RESOURCES

## A NOTE ABOUT CONFIDENTIAL & PRIVATE RESOURCES

**Private** resources are offices or resources on campus that can share information related to a report with University employees who “need to know” in order to assist in the active review, investigation, or resolution of the report. While private resources are not confidential, these individuals will be discreet and respect the privacy of all individuals involved in the process.

**Includes:** Equal Opportunity and Compliance, UNC Police, and the Office of the Dean of Students

**Confidential** resources are offices or resources which only disclose information shared with the individual’s express permission, unless there is a continuing threat of serious harm to the individual or to others or there is a legal obligation to reveal such information.

**Includes:** Gender Violence Services Coordinators, Counseling and Psychological Services, Campus Health, University Ombuds Office, Orange County Rape Crisis Center, Compass Center, and UNC Hospitals Emergency Department

There are many resources available at the University and in our local community. You don't need to be an expert in all the options available for students; instead, you can serve as a bridge to help the student connect with resources.

If you are designated as a Responsible Employee, the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office will provide appropriate outreach and information to the student when you make your report. However, you can still let the student know that resources are available. Sharing resources like Safe At UNC, the Gender Violence Services Coordinators, or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office can be a helpful place to start. We encourage faculty to highlight which resources are confidential.

If the student is interested and explicitly gives you permission, you could also offer to send an introduction email between the student and the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu) and/or the Report and Response Coordinators (reportandresponse@unc.edu) in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. The email doesn’t need to include details about what they’ve shared with you and can focus on their interest in potentially connecting with us.

When providing information about resources, it is important to refrain from providing advice or direction about which resource a student “should” connect with. We want to support individuals in making decisions that are best for them, whether that involves immediately reaching out to resources or taking some time to consider if that’s a step they would like to take.

## SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF

It can be difficult to learn that gender-based violence or harassment has impacted someone you know. It is not uncommon for individuals receiving disclosures and offering support to feel some level of impact personally. We encourage faculty to seek support for themselves and reach out to resources available on campus and in the community.

The Gender Violence Services Coordinators provide support for faculty and staff and welcome connecting with you to discuss any impact you may feel and discuss questions or concerns that arise as you are supporting a student. Faculty do not need to disclose identifying or specific information about a student in order for us to provide a supportive space for processing.



## PROFESSOR NOTIFICATIONS

A professor notification, offered by the [Gender Violence Services Coordinators](#) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), is an email sent to a professor (with the student copied) to notify them that the student is working with the resource and serves as an informal request for support. No specific details related to the student's experience are included in the email.

A professor notification is an informal academic support measure; it is separate from the formal accommodations a student can register for through [Accessibility Resources & Service](#). Most often, a professor notification does not include any specific requests for support. Instead, the email serves to open the door for further conversation between the student and professor.

We inform students that a notification does not provide guaranteed accommodations for the class. Students often find it helpful when the professor confirms they have received the notification and offers any show of support, whether that's an invitation for follow up conversation or specific options the professor is able and willing to provide.

## UNIVERSITY APPROVED ABSENCES

Students impacted by gender-based violence and harassment may qualify for a [University Approved Absence](#). This requires instructors to provide reasonable accommodations to allow students a fair and equitable experience in the course. University Approved Absences are approved by designated resources on campus and issued through the [University Approved Absence Office](#).

## ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES & SERVICE

Students impacted by gender-based violence and harassment may choose to register with [Accessibility Resources & Service \(ARS\)](#). ARS seeks to meet the individual needs of applicants and current students with disabilities and medical conditions as they relate to academics, residences, dining, and co and extra-curricular campus activities. They work to coordinate and implement appropriate reasonable accommodations including academic adjustments.



# FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Here are some ideas we like to share with faculty about creating a more inclusive and affirming classroom environment for individuals impacted by gender-based violence and harassment. Many of these help signal to students that you recognize the impact such experiences may have on their capacity as a student and that you're ready to support them.

**Syllabus Statement** - Including a syllabus statement in your course syllabus can convey your recognition of the impact gender-based violence and harassment may have on students. It also provides information about resources on campus and helps normalize seeking support. For an example of a syllabus statement, please refer to Safe At UNC's "[Supporting Victims/Survivors](#)" section.

**Complete HAVEN training** - Display your [HAVEN training](#) placard prominently in your office or include a note in your email signature, website, or syllabus.

**Content warnings** - Include notations on your syllabus for topics, assignments, readings, lectures, etc. that may relate to gender-based violence and harassment. Encourage students to reach out to you if they have concerns about their participations and/or completion of the coursework.

**Advance notice and/or reminders** of upcoming relevant coursework or topics can help individuals prepare for class and open the door for conversation regarding any concerns they have about their attendance or participation.

**Build in breaks** during discussions or lectures to provide students a couple minutes to get water, stretch, or briefly change up their environment. This can be helpful for students concerned about being singled out for excusing themselves in the middle of class.

**Consult with the GVSCs** - We're happy to consult with you and brainstorm ideas!

## IDEAS FOR SUPPORT IN THE COURSE

Here are some ideas we like to share with faculty about supporting students. We recognize not all of these may be possible for every course and we encourage faculty to balance support and flexibility while upholding the learning objectives of the course.

**Flexible attendance policy** - Some faculty may allow for additional absences, let a student to come late or leave early, or participate in a different way, like attending remotely versus in-person.

**Alternative assignments** - Some faculty create alternative assignments. We've seen faculty allow a student to present to only the professor and teaching assistant versus the entire class, submit reading summaries instead of class participation, or complete a written assignment with a different but relevant topic than the original assignment.

**Alternative testing locations or times** - Some students may benefit from taking their test or exam in a different location or at a different time. We've seen faculty use their offices, allow a teaching assistant to monitor, or have the student schedule a time with the [Undergraduate Testing Center](#).

**Assist in navigating a shared classroom** - A student may share a class with an individual who harmed them. If this situation occurs, it can be helpful to ensure they will not be assigned to a group for any shared projects or assignments.

**Grading** - Some faculty have shifted their grading weights for assignments. For example, if a student is struggling with attendance, the professor may lessen the weight of the grade for attendance and increase the weight for the midterm and final exam.

**Plan for the semester** - Offer to meet with the student to come up with a plan for the semester. This can be a great way to review the expectations and schedule of the class, identify areas of concern, and consider support available.

**Student disclosures** - If a student discloses in an assignment, it can be helpful to reach out to follow up. You can recognize their disclosure, thank them for sharing, and offer to connect them with information about resources.

**Consult with the GVSCs** - We're happy to consult with you and brainstorm ideas!

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Remote and virtual learning environments can present unique challenges. Video platforms, such as Zoom, invite us into an individual's personal space, which can greatly impact privacy. For students processing their own experiences, video access may feel intimate and like a violation of boundaries. Students may be trying to complete their coursework or attend class in the same space they experienced violence, or the location where they reside may not be a safe environment for them. For students experiencing stalking, their surroundings may provide cues or information about their location which could help someone monitor or track them. In circumstances of a shared class, the more direct "face-to-face" nature of virtual learning may increase the way an individual has to see or hear the person who harmed them. It also provides additional channels for contact and we've seen students receive unwanted communication and harassment through these platforms.

Many of the considerations for supporting an individual student mentioned above remain applicable in the virtual space. In addition, here are supports more specific to the remote and virtual learning environment.

**Flexible video policy** – We recognize teaching to a screen of blank squares can be very challenging. However, students may feel more comfortable participating and engaging in class if they have flexibility to turn their video on or off. Some professors always allow for video flexibility and some structure their course to include times where videos are required and others where they are not.

**Chat feature** – If you're aware of student concerns regarding unwanted communication, you might turn off the chat feature for the duration of class. In other cases, the chat feature may allow students to participate in a way that feels safer and more comfortable for them than audio and video.

**Exam proctoring** – If you require a proctored examination, it can be helpful to provide options for how it can be proctored. For some students, in-person proctoring may be preferred over sharing the virtual space with classmates or being monitored by an online, remote proctor who is not visible to them.

**Virtual backgrounds** – Virtual backgrounds can allow individuals to participate via video without having to show their location or surrounding environment.

## TOPICS THAT MAY BE DIFFICULT

An individual's experience of gender-based violence is unique to them, so it is difficult to know which topics may or may not be difficult for students in your class. Topics or content explicitly focused on or referencing sexual violence, interpersonal (relationship) violence, stalking, or sexual or gender-based harassment may be challenging. For others, it may be topics that are relevant to the circumstances of their own specific experience. We encourage faculty to create a classroom environment where students feel they can share their needs with you without requiring them to disclose specific details of their experience.

## UNDERSTANDING COMMON RESPONSES TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

There is no right way for an individual to respond or cope after experiencing gender-based violence or harassment. Responses may shift and change over time, too. For more information about common responses, visit Safe At UNC's [“Supporting Victims/Survivors”](#) section.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about **resources, support, and reporting options available** for students, faculty, and staff impacted by gender-based violence and harassment, please visit [Safe At UNC](#).

For more information about **reporting options and University policies** related to gender-based violence and harassment, please connect with the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#).

For more information about the **confidential support and advocacy**, please connect with the [Gender Violence Services Coordinators](#). We'd love to hear from you with questions, concerns, or ideas you might have in creating more supportive learning environments at Carolina. Please reach out to us at [gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu) or 919-962-1343.

To learn more about **supporting individuals** impacted by gender-based violence and harassment, sign-up for a [HAVEN training](#). HAVEN (Helping Advocates for Ending Violence Now) is a 3-hour training that emphasizes the importance of listening, responding compassionately, and connecting victims/survivors to resources on campus and in the community.